The Colonist.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 19, 1906.

The Colonist Printing & Publishing Company, Limited Liability.
27 Broad Street, Victoria, B.C.
A. G. SARGISON, Managing Director.

THE SEMI-WEEKLY COLONIST

One year	$1 00
Six months	50
Three months	25

Sent postpaid to Canada, United Kingdom and United States.

FREE PORTS.

It is observed with pleasure that the transportation commission has reported to the government at Ottawa in favor of making certain of the leading ports of Canada, including Victoria and Vancouver, free ports—not free in the sense in which old Victoria was a free port—free of tariff imposts—but free of harbor and all other dues. Should the government adopt the recommendation, which it is sincerely to be hoped it will, it will solve the question of pilotage dues and place the city on a most favorable basis as compared with Seattle and Tacoma and result in all probability in having coal bunkers constructed at Esquimalt. Victoria will then be in a position to take full advantage of its natural position.

WHAT IS INSUBORDINATION?

It is regrettable that it is necessary to discuss matters which are incidental to the enquiry now going on before Judge Lampman. Miss Cameron states that the Colonist professes to be fair and anxious for a "square deal," and is not fair and is not giving her a "square deal" in stating that her election would mean the placing of a premium upon "insubordination." She claims that the affidavits were, so to speak, her own property, and that legally she was entitled to keep them. In other words, as we understand it, the school trustees had no right to demand them, and, therefore she was not guilty of insubordination in not giving them up. Moreover, she claims that she did not then have them in her possession, and therefore, could not deliver up what she had not. We are afraid that it is playing with words to take that stand, and in this connection it may be desirable to state that throughout the controversy that has been raging, the Colonist has endeavored to differentiate between the personal relation and the public status of Miss Cameron in this matter. It is not now and never has been in the slightest degree unfriendly to Miss Cameron. It has been extremely sorry to discuss her from the public point of view.

To take her own position at the present time, as she defines it, she must have secured the affidavits from the children for a public purpose. They must have been taken for the object of proving to the trustees—alias the public—that the children making the affidavits did not use rulers in drawing certain figures. She did it in her public capacity as teacher. Therefore, the affidavits were public property, and not Miss Cameron's, and, therefore, they should have been given up to the trustees when demanded, no matter for what purpose they were required. It is not for Miss Cameron to pass judgment upon the trustees as to their motives in desiring them.

On the other hand, if Miss Cameron claims that they were her private property and were taken for private purposes, her action in getting the children to execute them was highly improper. Legal or morally, Miss Cameron is out of court.

Again, as Miss Cameron is standing on her legal rights, legally, the affidavits were in her possession when she was asked for them whether they were actually in the drawer of her desk or in Mr. Peirson's safe. Mr. Peirson was acting for her as the custodian of these documents. This view is confirmed by Mr. Peirson himself by the position he took when asked for them. They were, he said, not his property, but the property of Miss Cameron, and he could not give them up without her order.

Then, insubordination is not to be judged by the single act of refusal. Her conduct must be considered in relation to a series of acts and circumstances, all of which point to a flippant disregard for the wishes and opinions of the Board of school trustees, and other constituted authority as well. We cannot assume that there is any reason why Miss Cameron should be exempt on account of her extreme cleverness, which everybody admits, from the application of disciplinary methods necessary to the proper regulation of our public schools. If every teacher should take the same course absolute chaos would result. A great many, if not all, who are supporting her in her present attitude are doing so because they regard her a clever, an excellent teacher, and a good fighter, a quality proved by many a previous battle. However much these things may appeal to the personal sympathies, they are not the ground for support in an issue involving principle and public policy. Such qualities, if they were possessed by an unscrupulous person, would serve to make them all the more dangerous to the public interest.

We cannot help but feel that Miss Cameron brought her present trouble upon herself, and, there, does not deserve the sympathy of one who is persecuted or unfairly treated. No one imagines, not even Miss Cameron herself, that the decision of the board of examiners in regard to the drawing books was not conscientiously arrived at, or that the idea of discriminating against the South Park school was in the least present in their mind. It was unanimous, and was after careful examination confirmed as correct by members of the committee of public instruction, by several independent expert draughtsman, and by members of the school board, who, by the way, were previously prejudiced in Miss Cameron's favor. It is not to be assumed that all these persons were in league against Miss Cameron or the pupils.

When, in addition to these facts, it is stated that the pupils did not suffer in promotion by the drawing books being thrown out, we cannot arrive at any other conclusion than that the principal should have accepted the situation or have been content with making a statement to the trustees and to the Department of Education. She should have given up the affidavits when asked for. Had she done that we venture to say nothing more would have happened.

It is unfortunate that it is necessary to discuss such matters, at present being investigated by a Royal Commission. It is not just to the Commissioner, or to the others interested, but the discussion has been forced by Miss Cameron as she forced on the investigation. The Colonist is accused of being unfair, and it must in justice to itself state the grounds upon which its views as expressed are based. If Miss Cameron had bided the result of the Commission before appealing to the public, her position would have been made stronger than it is.

THE DEBATE ON THE ADDRESS.

Following the usual and time-honored custom of deferring to the "new man," the government this year picked upon Mr. Manson, of Alberni, to move the address. Mr. Manson, as the man who redeemed Alberni, has been a good deal in the public eye, and his speech was looked forward to with considerable expectancy. Nor did he disappoint his audience. His remarks were characteristic of the man, modestly made but carefully considered. He, naturally, devoted a good deal of time to his constituency, its resources, its accomplishments and its requirements; and, as we predicted at the time of his election, he has shown himself, so far, a capable representative and one who will justify all the confidence reposed in him by the electors when they returned him with a good majority.

Mr. Macgowan, the fourth member from Vancouver, was well received. Regarding his speech, even the leader of the opposition, who was in a querulous and unusually critical mood, expressed himself in terms of high compliment. Mr. Macgowan is not an eloquent speaker, but has the happy faculty of making strong points and of departing from the beaten paths. His remarks will have been read with interest and will doubtless have the careful consideration of the government.

Mr. Macdonald, the leader of the opposition, was unwilling to give the government credit for the slightest of good deeds, and in this he overdid the part of critic. Even the opposition press has been forced to admit the wisdom of the government's financial policy. With lawyer-like reserve, Mr. Macdonald will admit nothing, not even the existence of a surplus. Moreover, to every act of the government is imparted an atmosphere of suspicion. This wholesale imputation of motives is not the indication of a healthy mind